

セイバーキング

—まつりかねと神々と神殺しの魔王—

VI



The Illustrious Sage, True Lord Erlang (3)

Guided by the vortex of [Wind], Godou was brought to an unknown land.

Godou nodded, acknowledging the result of the instantaneous teleportation performed using Verethragna's authority.

Finding himself on a riverside strewn with gravel, Godou was confronted by a mixed forest's autumn leaves of vivid red. Clearly this was in a mountain forest somewhere. Seishuuin Ena, who had "summoned" Godou here, was a girl who trained in the mountains as if it were her daily homework.

She was currently a few meters ahead.

Ena usually wore that uniform from some high school who knows where. However, this time she was dressed Japanese style with a white kimono top, a red, male-style hakama and a pair of wooden geta clogs.

This attire was rather fitting for a miko and someone training in the mountains.

Furthermore, she was wielding a wooden sword in a stance.

Her blade was pointed towards a certain direction—a familiar set of three eyes!

A pair of slender eyes hovering in midair with a third eye that opened vertically. Godou yelled out:

"Seishuuin! That thing is apparently the will of a god called Erlang whatever!"

"Erlang... Could it actually be the Illustrious Sage, True Lord Erlang? This thing was trying to take over Ena's body, almost succeeding in its surprise attack."

While explaining nonchalantly, Ena still kept her gaze and the wooden sword directed towards the enemy.

But judging from the tone of her voice, she clearly did not feel like she was in danger. This was because she knew very well that she was the one who had invoked Godou's [Wind] incarnation. As expected of the Hime-Miko of the Sword, her boldness was exceptional.

"Rather than an actual god, this thing would be better described as part of a god's will, left behind in the world... That's what it feels like. Because it doesn't seem to have a material body, Ena thinks that as long as one prevents it from possessing someone's body, there won't be much danger."

Godou nodded emphatically in response to Ena's words.

As the user of the mystic technique, divine possession, she was more experienced than anyone in the area of contact with gods. Together with the fact that she possessed instincts like a beast, Godou was convinced she must be right.

However, Godou and Ena immediately stared with their eyes wide open in surprise.

The sun had already set, giving rise to a starry sky above. Radiantly flashing blue spheres of light were now descending from the night sky.

These spheres of light floated down slowly like snowflakes.

The blue spheres of light landed on the three eyeballs. In the next instant, the three eyes transformed into the form of a tall young man—his handsome face bearing stern dignity and propriety. His attire was reminiscent of Beijing opera costumes, Chinese in style and rather colorful. It resembled the military leader costume the Great Sage Equaling Heaven had worn.

Furthermore, he still had three eyes as if it were the most natural thing in the world. The vertically-opening third eye was positioned on his forehead!

(Hereby stands the nephew of the Jade Emperor, the general commanding the forces of heaven and earth, bearing the name of Erlang the Illustrious Sage and True Lord. Kusanagi Godou, as the villainous Devil King, you are the target I seek to vanquish. Prepare yourself.)

The young man announced his name and smiled clearly and candidly.

This smile was filled with the sort of magnificence belonging to someone who was utterly convinced of his own righteousness.

On the other hand, the voice he used to announce his name was neither clear nor candid. Instead, it sounded like a whisper.

This loudness should not be audible normally, but through suspicious divine powers, the voice was delivered to Godou and Ena's earshot.

"It turned into... a god?"

"This is something along the lines of a god's legacy will or regrets combining intimately with a body."

This sudden change greatly surprised Godou and Ena. However, there was no time to ponder the matter.

True Lord Erlang manifested a bladed weapon in his hand. The front part of the blade was shaped into three prongs—it's the double-edged trident!

"Watch out, Your Majesty!"

True Lord Erlang swung the double-edged trident to slash Godou.

Before the weapon could reach Godou, Ena stepped before him and blocked its path, intending to protect Godou. However, her weapon was merely an ordinary wooden sword—Godou immediately called out.

"Ama no Murakumo! Go and help Seishuuin!"

Alerted of the situation by Godou, Ena immediately threw away the wooden sword in her hand.

Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi suddenly manifested in her empty hands. Similar in structure to a Japanese sword, the divine sword had a mildly curving black blade. Swinging the sword she called her partner, Ena slashed at True Lord Erlang.

The respective blades of the god and the Hime-Miko clashed together.

Then they began exchanging blows, two or three at a time—Godou and Ena were dumbfounded once more.

Finding Ena's sword attack too difficult to evade normally, True Lord Erlang took a great leap backwards. Indeed, Ena was a master of the sword. Nevertheless, she should not be skilled enough to overwhelm a deity who was known as a warrior god of combat. Despite this being the case, why would he retreat...?

(—Hmph. Mobility is rather restricted since this is merely a crude body. I shall have to wait for some time. Once I grow accustomed to this body, I shall return for a rematch...)

The god whispered. Immediately after that, the three-eyed, handsome young man vanished like a puff of smoke.

"Oh? So that god appeared because of Ena and the rest? Sorry sorry."

"I have no intention of reprimanding you for that, but if you're going to apologize, a little more sincerity would be more appropriate."

After recounting the series of occurrences, Godou voiced his objections to Ena's airheaded apology.

According to Ena, this mountain was somewhere in a corner of Chichibu. She was training in the mountains as usual, using the deep mountain aura to cleanse and purify her body and mind.

"In that case, we'll just have to wait here for the strange god(?) to attack again. After all, he only came to this place for the purpose of targeting me. Plus deep in the mountains here, we won't be causing trouble to people and cities."

"Yes, understood. Let's do that."

Ena grinned and calmly expressed agreement.

In actual fact, Kusanagi Godou and Seishuuin Ena were surprisingly similar people. Both possessed animal-like instincts and personalities that tended to take action before worrying, thus allowing them to act decisively during emergencies.

Given these two as a team, prolonged strategy planning would be the last thing one would expect.

"Then the last issue is where we should wait for that guy to appear. Although we could just stay here, it's really quite cold."

Just earlier, Godou was still in the city center of Tokyo.

But now, he was in the deep mountains of Chichibu where autumn was in full swing. The location was also at quite a high altitude. With only regular street clothes, whether the wind or the night air itself, both felt rather chilly.

"Well, let's take Your Majesty to a nice place. There's a mountain hut not too far from here."

Ena immediately suggested.

"I know the old man who uses the place when he comes here for gathering mountain vegetables and hunting. Ena also keeps stuff like rice and miso there for emergency situations. So we can make dinner there."

"Dinner eh? That's a really great idea."

Although Godou already had dinner earlier, it was not enough to fill his stomach completely. Furthermore, a meal to warm up his cold body would be most gratifying. Godou's eyes began to shine brightly.

Thus the two of them started walking along a mountain path.

Before setting off, Ena wrote a letter using notebook paper and an oil-based marker she had brought. After folding the paper four times and throwing it into the air, the letter suddenly vanished. This was mailing magic for sending letters faraway. In this case, the destination was the Sayanomiya residence.

This was for reporting Godou and Ena's situation to Kaoru, Yuri, Liliana and the rest because cellphones had no reception in a mountain like this. However, this spell could not be used unless the receiver's location was known, which meant that Godou and Ena had no way of obtaining a reply...

At any rate, Godou and Ena fulfilled their minimum obligation to keep in touch.

Godou followed Ena along the mountain path which took them upstream of the river. Sometimes they had to push vegetation aside and other times they had to follow animal trails.

Naturally, there were no street lights or anything of that sort while they traveled at night like this.

When they walked in areas with a clear view of the sky, the moon and the stars offered illumination. The stars in the night canopy of the sky proved to be an unexpected bright source of light.

However, there was no such blessing when moving amidst dense foliage.

During these times, it felt like wandering in darkness with something sticky entangling one's body and Godou's only beacon was the view of Ena's back ahead of him. Even an experienced hiker would probably have difficulty advancing in these conditions.

On the other hand, Kusanagi Godou was a Campione.

In actual fact, given the "special constitution" of a godslayer, Godou possessed rather powerful night vision.

Well, it was still impossible for him to see clearly in complete darkness. But given "this level of darkness," there was no problem at all. Like a nocturnal beast, Godou followed closely behind Ena.

Speaking of which, there seemed to be someone who had called Campiones like Godou and others "god-slaying beasts"—

"Well, good night vision doesn't necessarily translate into hiking prowess..." Godou muttered as he followed behind Ena.

Because she was the child of nature who treated mountaing training as part of her everyday life, Ena walked rather quickly despite hiking at night. And to think she was also carrying a case containing her luggage—the "secret box" as it was known in the world of mountain training.

Godou had to summon his best effort to keep up or else he would soon be left behind.

That said, although his steps were not as quick and nimble, he did not pant or become out of breath. For someone who had always taken pride in his stamina, at least he succeeded in preserving his self-esteem. On the other hand, it was quite likely that Ena had intentionally controlled her pace to accommodate an "amateur" like him...

After walking a fair distance, they came to the side of a river again.

This place appeared to be upstream of their previous location. Godou suddenly had an idea.

"If we're going to make dinner, it'd be nice to catch some fish from this river."

"Yeah, but you won't have much luck fishing here. So it's best not to try."

"Really? The water looks so clear here, so I thought lots of fish would inhabit it."

Ena's nonchalant answer puzzled Godou.

The Hime-Miko of the Sword walking in front turned her head around, a grin displayed on her lips.

"There is a rapid current slightly downstream from here leading to a waterfall. The current is so fast that even fish find it difficult to swim in, which is why fish are rare in this area."

"Wow, this is really deep in the mountains."

The water flowing by should really be called the headwater or upper course rather than a river.

Feeling impressed, Godou nodded.

Although he was an athletic proponent of outdoor activities with plenty of camping and hiking experience, he had seldom stepped foot so deeply into the mountains. Without Ena as his guide, he would most probably run into trouble quickly.

At the same time, he was quite surprised by the [Wind]'s ability to transport him instantaneously this deep into the mountains.

But then again, this was the incarnation capable of transcending boundaries between reality and the Netherworld. Godou felt that so long as conditions were satisfied, he could even fly across to the other side of the globe.

Walking along this river, Godou and Ena soon arrived before a mountain hut.

It was a crude wooden dwelling built not too far from the river.

Were it in a city, an old and decrepit building like this would have been knocked down long ago. Not only was the entire house covered by a thin layer of dirt, it was also making creaking noises.

At least it still had a roof and despite the thin wooden boards used, it did have walls.

Given the current situation, it could be considered three-star accommodations. Following Ena who behaved as if she were returning to her own home, Godou entered with gratitude.

On their first encounter, Ena had brewed the same type of powdered tea she was serving now.

Last time, Ena's casual yet experienced looking manner of preparation resulted in very tasty tea. Currently, Ena was lighting up a fire on the hearth which was already smoked black from use.

A pot of water was freshly boiled over it.

"Although this isn't anything special and it's just crude tea literally... Please enjoy, Your Majesty."

Just as Godou expected, the crude tea Ena prepared casually turned out to be really tasty.

Despite the poorly preserved tea leaves in the hut and the use of an ordinary teapot one could find anywhere, the rich flavor made all these adverse conditions seem like a lie.

However, Godou went "Eh?" in puzzlement after drinking the tea.

Fishing rice grains out of a sack, Ena tossed them into the boiling water in the same manner as she had prepared the tea. She was quite casual about it. Rather than standing in testament to her free and unfettered personality, this simply gave Godou an impression of appropriate casualness.

"Let me warn beforehand. Do not expect too much from the taste of Ena's cooking."

"But I find your tea tasty as always, Seishuuin."

"Well, see, the art of tea has been part of a general's knowledge ever since ancient times."

This daughter, hailing from a family that gave rise to generals in the Warring States Period, explained in a pretentiously knowing manner.

Her original personality aside, Ena had received an excellent Yamato Nadeshiko education as a descendant from the House of Seishuuin. Could it be possible that cooking was one area she did not excel in?

Intrigued, Godou brought up another subject.

"That three-eyed guy... Do you think he can be considered a god?"

After the brief conflict just now, this was the question that had occupied Godou's mind as he hiked.

The handsome young man transformed from the three eyes—

Whether facing the set of eyes or the handsome young man, Godou's body and mind had filled with power for battle. This could be taken as proof of a god. However, the enemy's avoidance of a battle with Ena seemed a little contrary to the ways of [Heretic Gods]...

"Yes. It should be considered a god, probably. A god originating from the talisman of the Illustrious Sage, there is no mistake that he is the hero, True Lord Erlang, who defeated Sun Wukong."

Although delivered with a casual tone of voice, Ena still concurred with Godou's idea.

"Then some sort of circumstance is preventing him from going all out, but I've no idea what."

"You think so too, Seishuuin? Well, I don't think pondering it any further would yield anything useful. Since Mariya isn't here, let's just put the matter aside for now."

No matter what sort of origins the enemy had, ultimately Godou still had to meet him in battle.

Deciding that, Godou and Ena nodded to each other.

For this pair whose instinctual and beast-like skills surpassed their intellect, agreement was easily reached in situations like this one.

If Erica was present, she would probably mock him sardonically, going 'Despite insisting your adherence to reason all the time, you always end up acting the same way, Godou...'

"If you feel concerned, why don't we try asking Grampsy?"

Ena suddenly suggested.

"The talisman of the Illustrious Sage... This thing came from Grampsy and company in the Netherworld. Some kind of divine talisman prepared somewhere and taken for the purpose of sealing the dragon and snake vanquishing hero, Sun Wukong."

"Susanoo and those guys huh... Well, forget about it then."

The ancient ones who acted as the History Compilation Committee's "council of elders." The one acting as chief was Susanoo—recalling the

storm god who lived secluded in the Netherworld, Godou immediately responded.

"That guy's not gonna give us an honest answer."

"Yeah, Ena thinks so too, actually."

Ena nodded as if pleased with their agreement. She smiled for some reason.

"What's up, Seishuuin? You look so happy."

"Fufu. Because Your Majesty tends to share the same opinion most of the time, it's quite easy to imagine what you're thinking. Other than Your Majesty, there are very few... No, there's no one else who has a mind that thinks like Ena."

"W-Why do I feel like I'm nowhere near as ridiculous as you, Seishuuin..."

"What are you talking about? Your Majesty is roughly a hundred times more ridiculous than Ena."

Whether as a miko or a Yamato Nadeshiko, Seishuuin Ena was a girl beyond the realm of normal.

Godou could not help but protest against such a comment coming from someone like her. That said, after scrutinizing his own behavior, Godou could only swallow the words he was almost about to spit out—

Could she have guessed what he was thinking? As if encouraging Godou, Ena patted him on the shoulder.

"Cheer up. It's alright. No matter how ridiculous a person you are, Your Majesty, we will always stay by your side. No need to mind Ena and the rest of us, just continue to charge forward!"

"On the other hand, I wish you girls could restrain me before I charge forward..."

"Then it won't be very interesting. Besides, no one can stop Your Majesty when you're charging forward."

After commenting on Godou's personality with full confidence, Ena changed the subject.

"By the way... Your Majesty has already decided to fight, right?"

"Well yeah. That Erlang whatever guy seems to have his sights set on me. And if he really is a [Heretic God], then I need to take him down before he raises a commotion. That's really the way it should be done."

"Then, umm... That is necessary after all, right?"

Godou stared blankly all of a sudden. What was that referring to? Hence Ena whispered softly:

"The sword for slicing apart True Lord Erlang. It's a simple matter for you to obtain knowledge about what kind of god he is. All you need to do is ask, Your Majesty, and Ena will prepare immediately."

"Ehhh!?"

Asked by her so suddenly, Godou was rendered speechless. Then he also noticed.

Ena had started at some point to look up to him shyly as if observing his face for his intentions.

"B-Back in Nikkou when fighting side by side, Your Majesty has already recognized Ena as your woman, right?"

"R-R-R-Recognition is a bit premature to say. Besides, I'd curse and scold myself if I lived so irresponsibly as a despicable human being!"

"In any case, Ena is known publically as Your Majesty's woman. So it's fine..."

"Fine—!?"

"No matter how many times Your Majesty wishes to kiss... It's fine. Yes, Ena wants to kiss Your Majesty."

Hey hey. Isn't this behavior for instilling knowledge required for battling gods rather than for the sake of kissing?

Godou wanted to say this but could not bring himself to do so. As he thought, this was because mouth-to-mouth action was too shocking for him.

"Back then was when everyone was together... But Ena really wants to have a good and proper kiss with Your Majesty alone..."

Ena's lips trembled as she whispered softly. She was quite nervous.

The girl, unaccustomed to this behavior, was mustering her courage to 'plead' with him. In order to fight the god again, the trump card, the [Spell Words of the Sword], must be prepared beforehand after all.

These thoughts swirled into a vortex in Godou's mind as dozens of seconds passed. A brief moment of hesitation. But after overcoming these doubts, Godou finally made his decision.

Reaching out with his hand, he embraced Ena's body that was slender yet suitably voluptuous in all the right places.

"I'm relying on you. Please tell me about the god, True Lord Erlang."

"Ah..."

Godou used his lips to seal Ena's mouth just as she was about to whisper, stealing her lips.

Smooch. With the coming together of mucous membranes, the harmonious sounds roused Godou's inner passion to a blaze.

He separated from Ena's lips for an instant. The usually carefree girl displayed a sad expression, reluctant to part. Her eyes seemed to be pleading as she gazed at Godou, she did not speak.

She was feeling shy. This was an expression and attitude Godou could not imagine coming from the way Ena usually acted.

Finding her adorable, Godou once again drew near her lips.

Ena's face instantly brightened up. Pressing their lips together, they began to kiss again.

Godou sucked on the Ena's lips as she displayed a blissful expression, enjoying a fulfilling feeling of satisfaction.

"Your Majesty, let's have another go... Okay?"

Seductive words came from Ena's lips.

As Ena panted heavily, Godou kissed her even more forcefully, sucking on her lips.

On the other hand, Ena remained passive as if betraying her own request. All she did was yield and accommodate Godou.

She was completely different from Erica in this regard and unaccustomed to this behavior. She probably had little idea of what to do in this situation. Finding Ena inexorably adorable like this, Godou inserted his tongue into Ena's mouth and probed deep.

"Mmm... Ah!"

Surprised, Ena moaned. But unfazed, Godou began to explore her tongue inside Ena's mouth.

The two tongues entangled each other and came together intimately as one. Wetting each other's lips with their saliva, they gazed into each other's eyes.

After a long and thorough kiss, Godou moved his lips away again.

Ena's face was blushing red from ecstasy as she nodded at Godou, indicating it was about time to perform the "ritual." Godou covered her mouth with his lips to substitute for an answer.

"Th-The Illustrious Sage, True Lord Erlang is an ancient Chinese god. He is also known for his monster-slaying ability..."

Their lips pressed together, Ena seemed especially adorable as she murmured softly, accompanied by weak breaths.

"His prototype was once thought to be a general from the either the Qin or Sui dynasties. A man with great accomplishments in regulating floods. However, like the Great Sage Equaling Heaven, he ended up amalgamating historical facts with all sorts of folk stories to produce the current form of True Lord Erlang's legend..."

Their lips pressed together, spell words passed from one to the other, building a magical connection between the two of them.

Knowledge about True Lord Erlang the Illustrious Sage flowed into Godou's mind, the result of the spell words Ena had composed. Kissing repeatedly in this manner, the two transferred knowledge.

Not long after, Godou nodded greatly.

Knowledge about an enemy god was the requirement for using Verethragna's tenth incarnation, the [Warrior].

Once this knowledge was obtained, everything was ready. Godou confirmed that he was able to use this weapon. Filled with gratitude, Godou finally kissed Ena gently on the lips.

"Fufu. Ena is so happy to be able to help Your Majesty..."

After smiling adorably, Ena suddenly jumped in surprise.

She frantically separated herself from Godou's body. While engaged in their behavior, they had embraced each other, driven by their heightened emotions. Ena seemed to be suddenly embarrassed by her actions.

Avoiding Godou's gaze, Ena bowed her head, looking very shy. This sort of behavior made her usual boldness seem like a farfetched lie. Seeing her act so adorably, Godou decided he would feel bad if he extended her embarrassment any further. Hence he decided not to strike up conversation for now.

The pair remained silent for a brief while.

However, the silence was not awkward. Instead, there was a feeling as if their hearts were connected and they could communicate without words.

Godou spontaneously looked up and found his gaze meeting with Ena's. Feeling a little embarrassed, he peeked at Ena. Likewise, Ena peeked at Godou and they both smiled shyly at the same time.

Regaining their composure after a while, Ena looked at the pot on the hearth and said:

"Oh, looks like it's about done."

Thin porridge had been cooking over a slow fire during this time. Ena took out two little containers carrying salt and miso respectively.

Worrying about this Hime-Miko who was unskilled in cooking, Godou offered to help:

"If you don't mind, how about you let me do the rest?"

"It's okay, I want to test out the secret recipe I learned from an older man I'm acquainted with."

"Secret recipe? Sounds quite amazing."

"It's quite simple really. I remember him saying it when he was boiling something in a pot. No need to put too much stuff, just add enough miso to make the taste palatable. That's what he said roughly."

Using her usual unrefined manner, Ena scattered salt and miso into the thin porridge. After giving it a taste, she went "That's about right" and declared her task complete.

Pouring the thin porridge into their teacups, Godou and Ena began to eat.

In terms of results, it was quite a satisfying meal.

As the taste of miso spread throughout Godou's hungry stomach which had emptied as a result of physical exertion, the hot porridge warmed up his cold body.

However, the best seasoning was actually the opportunity to partake in this outdoor cooking with a kindred spirit like Ena here.



Several hours passed after the weapon was prepared and dinner was eaten—

Completely ready, Godou suddenly shuddered. Power coursed through his body and his emotions began to rise. This were battle preparations.

A Campione's body and mind would automatically enter battle readiness whenever a god approached.

As he gestured to Ena with his eyes, the Hime-Miko of the Sword nodded.

The two stood up and went outside the hut.

The approaching enemy should be the handsome god—the Illustrious Sage, True Lord Erlang.

"I knew it huh..."

Just as expected, a handsome young man was standing outside the hut, dressed glamorously. As Godou nodded at the sight, Ena instantly stepped forward from his side. She intended to participate in the battle.

"Your Majesty, Ama no Murakumo please."

Godou slowly opened his right palm and granted her the divine sword's usage rights.

This now allowed Ena to summon the "partner" at any time. However, in contrast to the girl who readied herself for battle, True Lord Erlang spoke, using his whispering voice as usual.

(O child of mankind, untainted by evil, I have no intention of harming an innocent girl. Only evil monsters are my targets for slaying.)

It sounded like a voice carried by wind from afar.

Under normal conditions, they should be hearing a candid and manly voice, right?

Such was the impression given by True Lord Erlang(?)'s voice.

(Would you please stand down as show of respect to the Illustrious Sage, True Lord Erlang...?)

"Impossible. As His Majesty's woman, Ena is responsible for managing his sword—this partner. I will protect His Majesty even at the cost of my life."

The jet-black divine sword suddenly manifested in Ena's hand as she made her bold declaration. The Hime-Miko's entire body proceeded to be filled with Ama no Murakumo no Tsurugi's divine aura.

Using this technique of divine possession, Ena obtained combat power allowing her to fight divine beasts, existences one step below gods.

True Lord Erlang smiled tenderly in response.

(Excellent resolve. Disregarding your foolishness of serving the wrong master, my name of Yang Erlang shall be tainted if I should fail to commend you for your loyalty. In that case, I swear I shall defeat Kusanagi Godou without bringing you to any harm!)

He really acted so much like an "ally of justice" that one could almost see a halo behind him.

It was quite fitting for a god known for benevolence and evil slaying. Nevertheless, Godou was quite surprised. He recalled the [Heretic God], Verethragna, he had met in the very beginning.

Thinking back closely, that youth was also a protector god of justice.

However, wandering on earth, he was devoured by the maniacal nature of his heretic self, twisting his original divinity subtly, going as far as to make him a menace to the inhabitants of Sardinia.

In contrast, True Lord Erlang the Illustrious Sage displayed such dazzling splendor—

Incomprehensible. Godou cast his doubts aside for now. He currently had to fight this three-eyed god.

"The Illustrious Sage, True Lord Erlang, was born as the nephew of the emperor of the heavens, the highest god in the Daoist pantheon!"

Godou spoke spell words softly, taking on the [Warrior] incarnation.

In order to create the blade for slicing apart this benevolent god, he continued to utter spell words.

"In ancient times, the sister of the emperor of the heavens descended upon the earth and bore a child with a human. This child is True Lord Erlang. As a soldier, indeed he served his uncle in the celestial realm."

Spheres of light appeared one after another in Godou's surroundings.

"However, the majority of his stories take place in the mortal realm, including the subduing of Sun Wukong. Despite being a god, True Lord Erlang made his residence in China's Guanzhou prefecture. After receiving divine orders to defeat Sun Wukong who was causing mayhem in the lower realm, he stepped forward to subdue the monkey."

Within the blink of an eye, the spheres of light now numbered in the hundreds.

Like radiant stars in a galaxy, shining in the night sky, these were all blades for slicing True Lord Erlang apart and weapons that moved in accordance with Godou's thoughts.

Readying his deadly sword formation, Godou glared at his enemy sharply.

"A noble heavenly being who lingered in the mortal realm to fight and perform benevolent deeds. In other words, a legend of a wandering noble. Rather than a pure god of war, he was a archetypical protagonist from legends of wandering nobles—this is precisely True Lord Erlang's characteristic and the reason why the people revere and praise him!"

Responding to these spell words that carried the intent to attack, dozens of spheres of light flew towards True Lord Erlang.

On the other hand, the three-eyed, handsome young man smiled cheerfully despite being the target. He was quite composed.

(Hmph. To be honest, I already understand your sword quite well.)

These words, delivered with a smile, greatly surprised Godou.

(Indeed, the spell words for slicing through us gods is a troublesome weapon. But so long as one knows its operating principles, one could easily come up with quite a number of counters.)

"Counters!?"

As Godou watched in surprise, True Lord Erlang underwent a transformation.

The three-eyed handsome young man instantly took on the form of a monkey. Standing 160cm in height, wearing a yellow Beijing opera costume, wielding the Ruyi Staf—this appearance belonged precisely to the Great Sage Equaling Heaven, Sun Wukong!

(Behold, I am not the divine lord, the Illustrious Sage. My family name is Sun, given name is Wukong... The Great Sage Equaling Heaven hereby announces his entry!)

The flying spell words of the sword all struck Sun Wukong/True Lord Erlang.

However, these spheres of light, which were normally supposed to slice through his divinity, only ended up bumping into Sun Wukong's body of flesh. They were unable to cause any damage at all!

"This is a spell of transformation, Your Majesty. Like Sun Wukong, True Lord Erlang is also a god skilled in transformation!"

"Using [Transformation] to become another god, thereby obtaining a body unaffected by the [Sword]!?"

The spell words for slicing True Lord Erlang could not cut the Great Sage Equaling Heaven.

Through Ena's warning and the [Warrior]'s eyes that could see through an enemy's traits, Godou discerned what his enemy had done.

Furthermore, he discovered another fact.

Apart from the [Warrior], none of Verethragna's incarnations were available.

Let alone the [Bull] or the [Raptor], even the trump card that was in certain ways more precious than the [Warrior]—the [White Stallion]—could not be used.

Godou frowned.

[Heretic Gods] and Campiones were existences reviled by the world for the most part.

Consequently, the [White Stallion] incarnation was able to take a decisive role in most of Godou's battles by exterminating the people's public enemy. However, in True Lord Erlang's case—

He had shown consideration by refraining from harming Liliana, Yuri, Ena and the others.

In other words, True Lord Erlang's actions embodied his existence as a "perfect god of benevolence" who "only vanquished evil." Hence, he could not possibly become the [White Stallion]'s target.

"None of my usual tactics work at all... So I guess the 'nemesis' Mariya mentioned is this guy huh."

Finding the enemy more difficult to handle than expected, Godou muttered.

But involuntarily, his lips twisted in a savage grin, forming a grotesque shape.

Fine by me. Even if I cannot use the spell words of the sword or the power of the sun, I'll still continue to fight. No matter what, I will seize victory in my hands. After all, that's exactly what I've been doing all along.

Fighting hopeless battles against enemies with no chance of winning—

Kusanagi Godou found himself gradually accustomed to this sort of challenging situation despite his best intentions!

(Fufufufu. What sharp eyes you have. As a Devil King who stands as the enemy of gods, this is more like it.)

True Lord Erlang whispered as if responding to Godou's fighting spirit.

Then Sun Wukong's body began to change. From a war god in the shape of a monkey, he instantly turned into a tall and muscular old man.

This was a person—no, god whom Godou recognized.

"Grampsy!?"

Ena cried out. After taking on Sun Wukong's appearance, True Lord Erlang transformed into Susanoo this time.

—To be continued...

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Credits

Story : Taketsuki Jou
Illustrator : Sikorsky
Translator : zzhk

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